

Honoring John N. DeHaas (1926-2011)

John N. DeHaas Memorial Award

By Mark Baumler, State Historic Preservation Officer

2013 Preservation Awards Ceremony

Myrna Loy Center, Helena

January 18, 2013

Today, before presenting our 2013 Preservation Awards, the State Historic Preservation Office wishes to honor the life of a Montana preservation pioneer, John N. DeHaas, who has also recently passed away - two years ago in 2011.

In his life, John DeHaas brought attention to those places that define Montana's early days. Whether or not you ever met him, he was a kindred spirit to anyone who's ever nurtured the idea that our historic places matter; and that to save them we must act.

Born on the Fourth of July in Philadelphia, 1926, John grew up in a city known for its classical architecture. He went on to study architecture at Texas A&M. There he met his wife, Bernice, and the couple moved to Bozeman in 1951 when John accepted a position at Montana State College teaching the history of architecture. He taught there until 1980. Throughout his career, John was awestruck by Montana's ghost towns and historic architecture. He recognized that these buildings, some of which were crumbling, needed an advocate.

John worked on behalf of preservation before there was a SHPO, a National Register program, or any clear future for these places. He is widely recognized as the father of modern historic preservation in Montana, for which he received a State Preservation Award in 1989.

As an advocate for preservation, John co-founded the Montana Ghost Town Preservation Society. He also nominated countless properties to the National Register; served on the early Montana state preservation review board; wrote books and articles; spoke publicly; recorded buildings to exact standards; and published award-winning photographs. As the newly formed SHPO took shape in the 1970s, John was an eager ally volunteering his time and expertise.

Later in life, John lost his eyesight to a hereditary eye disease. Despite this, he continued his advocacy and never lost the urge to explore Montana's historic places with Bernice. In 1984 the American Institute of Architects inducted him into its College of Fellows for his services to preservation and for imparting to his students (future architects) that interest.

Today we honor John and his career by establishing the "John N. DeHaas Memorial Award" to be awarded in future Preservation Award Ceremonies. Consistent with John's pioneering achievements, the award will recognize individuals and organizations whose service and accomplishments go above and beyond and take us further along the historic preservation trail in Montana that John DeHaas began blazing more than 60 years ago.

At this time I would invite John's widow, **Bernice**, his son **Ken**, and daughter **Jocelyn** to come forward to accept a token of our appreciation from the Governor.